

crampons to ascend more broken terrain to the summit. On the descent, they skied from the point where they had left their skis, enjoying their turns all the way back to their base camp. Poor weather prevented any significant attempt on Francais.

The yacht *Northanger* made a return to Antarctic waters, again skippered by Canadian residents Greg Landreth and Keri Pashuk. On board were Eduard Birnbacher of Germany, Niel Fox and Roger Robinson of the UK and Jonathan Selby of New Zealand. The team experienced a very rough crossing of the Drake Passage in mid-February and *Northanger* arrived at the Port Lockroy area on Wiencke Island requiring a significant amount of repair work. This was undertaken by Landreth and Pashuk, thus removing them from any climbing activity.

Around the end of February Birnbacher and Fox climbed to the southernmost of the rocky points on the ridge between Jabet Peak (545m) and Noble Peak (720m) on Wiencke Island. They climbed from the eastern side, up a 50°-60° couloir for 400m before climbing two and a half pitches along the loose, rocky ridge to a point they reported as being 700m. This ridge was first traversed on November 16th, 1948 by the British climbers Pawson and Blyth, who had made the first ascent of Noble Peak the previous week. Numerous routes on this massif, and on Wiencke Island in general, have been climbed since the first ascent of Jabet in May, 1948. The Wiencke Island area is now probably the most-visited Peninsula destination for yacht-based climbers, due in part to the good anchorage at Port Lockroy. Though other parties have traversed off this ridge, on this occasion Birnbacher and Fox saw fit to rappel their route of ascent, leaving behind pitons and slings for anchors.

The same pair later climbed to a 650m ridge-point on the north ridge of Wandel Peak (980m). Wandel is the highest point of Booth Island and is unclimbed (see photo in AAJ 2001). Its north ridge was attempted in February 1997 by Greg Landreth, Jia Condon and Rich Prohaska while Keri Pashuk minded *Northanger*. Booth Island forms the eastern side of the spectacular and popular Lemaire Channel, so Wandel Peak is seen, at least in good weather, by over 10,000 ship-bound tourists a year. Though relatively accessible, it remains one of the most challenging unclimbed objectives on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Though Birnbacher and Fox climbed a significant amount of technical terrain, with ice to 75° and poor quality rock to UIAA V, they were halted by the heavily corniced ridge between their high-point and the summit of Wandel Peak. The pair rappelled and downclimbed their route of ascent and returned to *Northanger* for a seven-day voyage back to Ushuaia, arriving on March 18th.

DAMIEN GILDEA, AAC, Australia

## DRONNING MAUD LAND

*Summary of activities.* In late January an experienced team of Russian mountaineers flew in to Dronning Maud Land, aiming to make a number of ascents among the spectacular spires for which this area is now famous. The group flew from Cape Town, South Africa in an Ilyushin-76, landing at the Russian base Novolazarevskaya ('Novo') on January 25th.

A reconnaissance party had already been in during December, traveling in two six-wheeled diesel-powered buggies, the same type used for a journey to the South Pole in the 1999-2000 season. The buggies arrived via the Russian ship Akademik Federov and were unloaded on to the ice shelf on December 18th. In early January a crew of three drove the buggies

on a 450km return trip in to the Orvin Mountains, to scout a suitable landing area for the Antonov-2 plane that was planning to deliver the climbing team.

Instead, the team eventually used the buggies to travel from Novo base around 150km into the Wohlthat Mountains. The peaks visited are over 100km to the east and slightly north of the better-known massifs containing peaks like Ulvetanna and Rakekniven. One of the buggies became inoperable and the remaining buggy was used to reconnoiter the area for climbing objectives. The first ascent was an unnamed peak at 71°36.375S 12°38.12E, climbed by Yevgeniy Vinogradsky, Valeriy Pershin and Alexandr Foigt on January 30th and given the unofficial name “Georgi Zhukov.”

On February 1st Vinogradsky and Pershin, with Yuriy Baikovsky and Georgi Gatagov climbed another peak, supposedly 2,255m, 15km to the north-west of the previous peak. This second peak they named “Holy Boris and Gleb.” The climbers reportedly placed a cross of the Russian Orthodox Church on its summit. *(Though unconfirmed, if true, this move is to be condemned, as it sets an undesirable precedent and violates the regulations of the “Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty” that deal with removal of all introduced material by expeditions. Generally, Antarctic mountaineers neither take nor leave anything from a summit.—DG)*

Two days later Foigt, Pershin, and Vinogradsky climbed a 2,239m peak around 5km from their base camp. Then, on February 5th, Baikovsky, Gatagov, Vinogradsky, Maxim Volkov, and the leader, Valeri Kuzin, climbed another peak close to their base camp, which they named “Geser Peak.”

While these ascents were taking place, Khvostenko, Kuznetsov, Sokolov, and Zakharov were climbing a difficult new wall route on one of the Svarthorna Peaks, in this case a 2,585m spire that the team named “Peak Valery Chkalov.” These Svarthorna Peaks have sometimes been known as “Mount Schwarze” or “Shvartse,” another name that the Russians used on this occasion. This new route involved two days of fixing ropes to start, then another six days of climbing, plus a day to descend on February 6th. The team reported excellent crack climbing, much of it freed up to 6b, on sound rock that took both natural and bolt protection. Nights were spent in portaledges, though luckily the weather was excellent for the duration of the climb.

The expedition then began plans to return north to Novo, proposing three round trips in the one remaining buggy. However, shortly in to the first trip, not far from their base camp, the buggy went in to a crevasse and was damaged beyond repair. The team was then rescued by an Antonov-2 plane from the Russian Antarctic program and left Antarctica for Cape Town on February 10th.

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*South Georgia, various activity.* Bad weather thwarted attempts by a team off the 15m ketch Gambo to make three first ascents on South Georgia, and a new route up the island’s highest peak, Mt. Paget. During the team’s month-long stay, mass balance and radar data of the Nordenskjöld Glacier and a bathymetric survey of its front were also gathered in support of a scientific research program to quantify the impact of climate change and water-quality on the southern high-latitudes. We called ours the Antarctic Convergence Zone Expedition: South Georgia ’03.

The international team of seven, led by myself, a Welsh glaciologist and mountaineer, set out from Cape Horn for South Georgia in mid-February on the second year of this adventure-research program. After a challenging voyage made interesting by an above-average density of